



MAKING A POINT: Traveller Mrs Margaret McCann protesting yesterday outside Chelmsford's Civic Centre, where the public inquiry into her planning application was being held

Photograph
OWEN HIN

Travellers' planning appeal battle

Family were refused consent on plot

By James Hore

A TRAVELLING family who were evicted from farmland they owned in Essex has launched an appeal against a refusal to grant them planning permission.

About 15 separate families bought plots of land at Little Waltham, near Chelmsford, from a farmer in 2001, hoping to make their homes there.

However, when they failed to get planning permission they were given an eviction notice, ordering them from the Cranham Lane site.

In January last year, following an order from the High Court, bailiffs hired by Chelmsford Borough Council moved onto the land and evicted all the families amid violent and chaotic scenes.

But yesterday, a public inquiry was held at Chelmsford's Civic Centre looking at the case of traveller Margaret McCann, who claims her planning application for "Meadowlands" was not even considered until six months after the eviction.

Giving evidence, a pregnant Mrs McCann told the inquiry that she would not be happy living in a house, in the same way that some

one who lives in a house would not be content to have to live in a caravan.

During the lunchtime break there was a small demonstration held outside the centre, organised by the Gypsy and Traveller Affairs group.

Back in the inquiry the founder of the group, Grattan Puixon, said the council had misled the High Court by suggesting there had been other places available to the travellers.

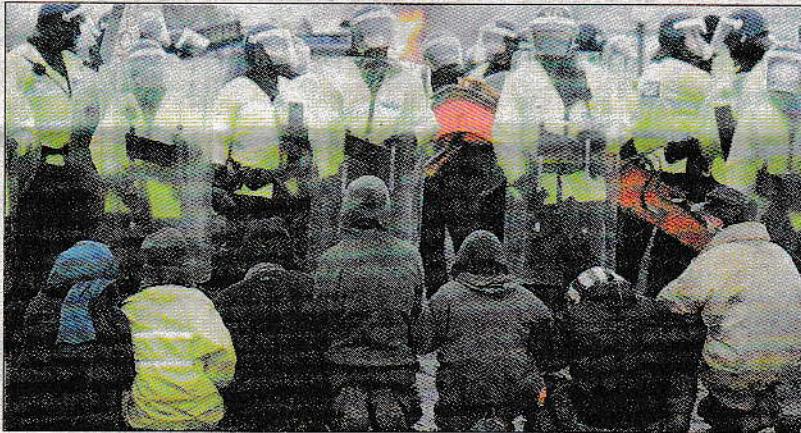
He said it was his opinion that the field was in better condition when it was occupied and looked after than it now is, saying it is now surrounded by 15ft high banks with large concrete cylinders preventing access.

Mark Beard, for the council, said Mrs McCann had failed to demonstrate she was of nomadic background and travelled for economic purposes, criteria which would have given her Gypsy status.

He said any national need for travellers' sites could not outweigh the harm which would be caused by giving planning permission at Little Waltham.

A decision from the planning inspector is expected within six to eight weeks.

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FLASHBACK:
Police in riot gear step in to remove travellers from their site at Cranham Lane, Little Waltham, near Chelmsford

Photo:
JAMES
FLETCHER

HORKES

Heritage & C

Horkesley Park is about sustaining the environment, a fast-expanding Colchester conserving our heritage so

The creation of Horkesley gallery and beautiful countryside heart of Colchester, will provide great many people in the area with further afield.

Horkesley Park is far more than just a park, so we have produced an 8-page booklet

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~ Location Map ~ Frequency of events ~ Details of where to go ~

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